

Hypo-reactivity

Below are some strategies that may be helpful if your child is **hypo-reactive** to sensory stimuli. If your child has hypo-reactivity they may not respond to stimulation around them. For children who are hypo-reactive it is important you get their attention before you start communicating fully with them. Also remember to break down instructions into small steps and use short phrases. Reducing background noises, lights and smells will give your child the best chance of responding to you.

You may find it helpful to work with an occupational therapist who can provide advice on how best to implement some of the strategies described. You can find more detail and other strategies in our complete **sensory processing guide for parents**.

Auditory hypo-reactivity

If your child does not always respond to noises or sounds, the following ideas may help:

- Gaining the person's attention before speaking to them (through touch or visual cues)
- Breaking down instructions into smaller steps
- Removing distracting background noise

Tactile hypo-reactivity

If your child does not always respond to touch or differentiate between textures, the following ideas may help:

- Gain the person's attention before touching them (using visual or verbal cues)
- Consult with an occupational therapist to provide activities to increase tactile awareness e.g. messy play activities

Visual hypo-reactivity

If your child does not always respond to visual stimuli, the following ideas may help:

- Providing visual structure such as colour code books and timetables/schedules
- Allowing access to preferred types of visual stimulation for certain periods in the day



Our sensory processing guide outlines the most common sensory processing difficulties, as well as providing an overview of sensory assessments, interventions and strategies for sensory processing difficulties. You can download the guide at <https://cerebra.org.uk/download/sensory-processing/>.

Olfactory (smell) hypo-reactivity

If your child does not always respond to smells, the following ideas may help:

- Provide activities that use items that have strong smells (e.g. scented play dough, cooking with strong smells)
- Provide appropriate scented items such as hand cream or aromatherapy oils and direct your child to them when they attempt to smell people or potentially harmful materials

Gustatory (taste) hypo-reactivity

If your child does not always respond to tastes, the following ideas may help:

- Add strong flavours to your child's meals or to choose strongly flavoured food e.g. chilli flakes, black pepper, citrus fruits, strong cheese
 - If your child tries to eat non-food items, teach your child to discriminate between edible and non-edible items e.g. use a green box for edible items and a red box for nonedible items
 - Select items which are similar in taste/texture to the non-food item that your child seems to be seeking e.g. chewy tubes, chewy sweets, dried fruit, raw vegetables
 - Encourage your child to engage in oral activities e.g. blowing bubbles, blowing up a balloon, playing a wind instrument
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Full information about the authors can be found in our [sensory processing guide for parents](#).

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